



Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Liaison Panel of the Board of Conservators of Ashdown Forest

Wednesday 22nd March 19.00 – 20.00 Ashdown Forest Centre

Present on behalf of the Conservators of Ashdown Forest: Tony Reid, Michael Cooper and Philip Glyn. **Staff:** Pat Buesnel (Director). **Present on behalf of Parishes/Councils:** Lolita Reeves (Maresfield), Catherine Crouch (Danehill), Paul Brown (PEB) (West Hoathly), Keith Obbard (Withyham), Vivien Hill (Forest Row), Geoffrey Sheard (Buxted), Tony Lewin (Forest Row), **Representing the Friends of Ashdown Forest:** Pat Arnold

1. **Introductions:** Tony Reid (Chairman) welcomed everyone to the meeting.
Apologies: John Francis (Conservator), Quentin Burch (Crowborough Town Council),
2. **Minutes of the last meeting (December):** agreed.

3. **Matters arising:**

MA Item 5: Tony Reid reported that the Board had invited all Parish and Town Councils in or around the Forest to a meet with the Conservators to discuss the Forests finances as described at the last meeting – to date a positive response had been received from Maresfield, Danehill, Crowborough, Uckfield and East Grinstead. Liaison members reiterated their support for this action and will prompt those Councils that have not replied to date.

In response to a query at the last meeting PB reported that bracken can and has been successfully used for horses in a number of places, however there is ongoing research as to any side effects.

Item 4: PB reported that there had been a number of break-ins in Lintons, Reservoir, Old Lodge and Gills Lap car parks, the police have loaned 3 Wildlife cameras for use at our discretion. PB also reported that there had been a number of deer poaching incidents during the current culling season.

Item 9: PB reported that the Friends had generously agreed to fund repairs of 3 car parks and although the Forest Centre was not one of them it could mean that the budget could be used for other car parks.

4. **Forest Update:** The Director spoke to the reports (previously circulated) and updated the following:
 - A 'new' box area has been added to Broadstone car park for use by AFRA members only
 - Forest Centre Development: PB reported that the bid to WDC for kitchen refurbishment had been successful (matched by volunteer time) – work will commence in June/July.
 - WDC SAMMS: There has been no release of funds for SAMMS projects, PB has been told that the holdup is due to slow progress on a legal agreement between the 7 LAs involved. PB circulated a WDC Briefing Document re Nitrogen Deposition. Philip Glyn asked if there had been any discussion with WDC re. the proposal to restoring land back to heathland PB responded that other than the report, there had been no formal approach by WDC. PB suggested that members may be interested in the results of the WDC visitor survey:
http://www.wealden.gov.uk/Wealden/Residents/Planning_and_Building_Control/Planning_Policy/CoreStrategy/CoreStrategyLibrary/Planning_Evidence_Base_Habitat_Regulations_Assessment.aspx
One of the standout results is the estimate of 4000 visits per day.

- PB reported that Forest Row Film Club hosted a Triple Bill of the film, soundscape and an archive Forest film on the 10th March – a great success with 100+ in attendance.
 - Education programme going very well – we will be having a Family Bug Hunting Day on April 8th - details on website.
 - PB pointed out that the Management Information report had a formula error and should be ignored – updated hard copies were circulated and are also attached.
5. **Governance review:** the Chairman reported that the Charity Commission had agreed in principal to a Charitable Company Ltd by Guarantee being established to handle the general management of the Forest and develop a trading and fundraising platform, with the Board acting as both Charity Trustee of the Ashdown Forest Trust and in its traditional role as Conservators under the 1974 Act. The Board will oversee the delivery of the new organisation and ensure it abides by its Articles of Association – these are currently being worked on by the ESCC legal dept. Michael Cooper stated that these changes were needed to ensure a professionally run organisation with the ability to raise funds, develop a trading arm and claim VAT. PB circulated a briefing note (attached).
6. **Countryside Stewardship (CS):** Philip Glyn (Vice Chair Conservation Committee) updated on progress of the CS scheme and confirmed that payment had now been received from Natural England. Despite the difficulties caused by the resulting cash flow issue progress had been made on all the relevant projects. A short discussion took place with regard to the fencing options being considered in the light of DEFRA's decision not to currently support any additional invisible fencing (IF) until receipt of official agreement from the Chief Vet. There was general agreement that fencing along the A22 would be a good start, as would 'back up' areas for IF loops as an additional safety measure. PB advised that the Grazing Team will be holding a series of public 'grazing walks' during the summer.

PB circulated maps of grazing enclosures for 2017.

PB updated on the Deer Programme – it was agreed that a presentation by the Deer Programme Coordinator at the next meeting would be informative for all. **Action: PB**

7. **Forest Centre Development:** Funding for Centre development remains an issue and until the Governance review is concluded it is difficult to take forward the major plans as per the two agreed planning consents. See **Forest Update** above for further details.

8. **Items from Parishes:**

Maresfield: Lolita Reeves reported on the successful litter pick around Fairwarp but expressed dismay at the amount of litter collected – she asked if occasional signs could be put up to remind people to take litter home, this has been successful in other areas. **Action: PB to confirm.** PEB reported that **West Hoathly** had a problem with large bags of rubbish being dumped plus beer cans; this was echoed by others plus the problems of bags of dog mess and flytipping. It was felt that the reduction in hours of Council 'tips' had only added to the problem.

9. **Any other business:** none

10. **Dates of meetings 2017: 7-8pm at the Forest Centre**

June 28th

September 27th

December 13th